

# SCIENTISTS MEETING IN MAUI STRESS RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Thirteen noted whale scientists from California, Washington, Alaska, Hawai‘i, Mexico and Japan met on Maui last December to discuss ways to improve research on the North Pacific humpback whale population. Hosted by sanctuary headquarters in Kīhei, the scientists gathered to plan a new, collaborative project called SPLASH (structure of population, levels of abundance and status of humpbacks).

David Mattila, science and rescue coordinator for the sanctuary, and coordinator of the meeting, said that the discussions were very productive. “While researchers in Hawai‘i, and beyond, are conducting exciting and important studies, there are some questions that can only be addressed by a large scale collaboration,” he said. “This group discussed ways that researchers in the Pacific can combine their efforts to answer some of these large scale questions.” He also said that new genetic research and high tech monitoring devices are now available that will provide valuable data that has not been obtainable in the past.

Speaking at a standing-room-only public lecture at the Outrigger Wailea Resort was John Calambokidis, Senior Research Biologist of Cascadia Research in Columbia, Washington, who gave a presentation on his recent work along the coast of North America, from British Columbia to the Baja peninsula, one of three migration routes of the North Pacific Humpback whale. The other migration destinations are Hawai‘i and southern Japan. He also talked about his work with blue whales.

The audience gasped audibly when he showed a video clip of a blue whale diving from the surface to feed on a large school of krill, the whale’s basic food source. The dramatic footage was taken with a small “critter cam” attached to the back of the whale by a suction cup. Calambokidis said that before commercial whaling ended in the 1960s, the population of the humpback whales in the Pacific was around 15,000, but the latest population studies indicate that the population is now only about 6,000-8,000. Y



HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HUMPBACK WHALE  
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PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES  
PAID  
National Oceanic &  
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## KAUA'I SANCTUARY OFFICE INITIATES DYNAMIC STUDENT-BASED OCEAN COUNT PROGRAM

A strong team effort on the part of sanctuary staff, NOAA Fisheries staff, and Department of Education teachers led to a highly successful student-based Ocean Count program this year on Kaua‘i.

“This was a great team project,” said Kaua‘i sanctuary site manager, Jean Souza. “Everyone worked really well together to create some very dynamic curriculum that the kids really enjoyed and were excited about.”

In January, sanctuary staff conducted two educator workshops for five teachers from two schools. These workshops gave the teachers information about the sanctuary and humpback whales. With assistance from sanctuary staff and volunteers, NOAA Fisheries’ David Nichols and Molly Timmers also conducted hands-on student workshops on marine debris and whale disentanglement techniques in March at the Kaua‘i Children’s Discovery Museum.



'Ele'ele School  
Haunani Seward's 6th grade class at 'Ele'ele School participates in Sanctuary Ocean Count 2003.

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## ENTANGLED WHALE SUCCESSFULLY RELEASED Rescuers taken on a “Nantucket sleigh ride”



Ed Lyman and David Mattila prepare to attach a tracking bouy to rope trailing from the entangled humpback.

While students have been involved in the Ocean Count program in the past, this was the first time that schools have adopted and adapted the program as a school-based activity, using their ocean-view campuses at Kapa‘a Middle School and ‘Ele‘ele Elementary School as viewing sites.

The entire sixth grade at ‘Ele‘ele School, consisting of four classes and more than 100 students, collected data from their campus overlooking Hanapēpē Bay and Pū‘olu Point on the island’s Westside on March 6. These students studied humpback whale behavior, anatomy, songs, research, marine debris and whale disentanglement, reef habitats, hermit crabs and other ocean

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Before successfully releasing 100 feet of rope entangled on a 35-foot long humpback whale, rescuers were taken on a wild eight-mile ride in their customized inflatable boat.

The young whale was first spotted by Willy Bennett, a private boater, who called NOAA Fisheries hot-line and the Sanctuary’s headquarters in Kīhei. With support and authorization from the NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Area Office, sanctuary science and rescue coordinator David Mattila quickly

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### ABOUT THE SANCTUARY

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary was established by Congress in 1992 to protect humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai‘i. To achieve this goal, the sanctuary conducts public education and scientific research in coordination with a variety of government and non-government organizations. As part of the National Marine Sanctuary System administered by the National Ocean Service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the sanctuary is one of 13 areas designated as marine environments of national significance. NOAA and the State of Hawai‘i co-manage the sanctuary as a federal-state partnership.





# VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Patti Dail is a woman with a mission. To her the slogan “See a Tail Save a Whale” is much more than a catchy phrase, it has become her passion, her raison d’etre. “Before I started volunteering at the sanctuary headquarters in Kīhei, I’d never been devoted to anything in the community,” said the spunky 37 year-old. “Becoming involved with whales and the sanctuary has been a life changing experience for me.”



Patti Dail, Sanctuary Volunteer

Dail, who has been living in Maui for eight years, became a volunteer at the sanctuary last May in a rather unique way. “I had a recurring dream about Keiko the whale 10 days in a row,” said Dail. It was these whale dreams that led her to stop by the sanctuary education center to learn more about the whales she often sees off the coast.

Her initial experience must have been a good one because Dail was immediately drawn in to the mission of the sanctuary - to protect Pacific humpback whales—and began volunteering practically on-the-spot. She has been through several volunteer training sessions and has become a devoted whale count participant who can be found almost daily on the headquarters viewing deck scanning the sea with binoculars for hours on end. “At first it was hard to locate whales, but now it has become easier and it’s really exciting!”

Dail’s new-found interest in whales has also led her to advocate for the release of captive show whales, including “Lolita” the now famous orca that was captured and sold into captivity in 1970. “When I think about it, I get all tearyeyed,” she said.

The Kīhei headquarters has a core group of about 40-50 volunteers who consistently contribute their time and efforts to the sanctuary program by helping with mailings, buildings and grounds maintenance, designing educational aids, organizing and cataloging library items, staffing the information desk, and assisting with school groups. Many other volunteers participate in regular beach clean-up days throughout the year.

Sanctuary staff, assisted by representatives from various county, state and federal agencies, provide regular classroom training sessions for these volunteers as well as field trips to view whales and to learn about Hawaiian cultural sites, including fishponds and taro fields.

“It has been exciting to see the program grow,” said volunteer coordinator Cindy Hylkema. “Our volunteers are the backbone of our program.” Y

STUDENT-BASED... Cont. from page 1

topics and preservation issues. The teachers who coordinated this project were Leighton Kabutan, Haunani Seward, Malia Finazzo, and Jocelyn Caalim.

Twenty students from Kapa’a Middle School’s sixth grade special education class, headed by Special Education teacher Lu Salter, undertook a month-long survey from their campus on the island’s Eastside.

“The program was such a success,” said Souza. “The combination of teachers’ ideas and commitments, students’ interest and enthusiasm, and NOAA’s resources resulted in a very integrated program on whales and oceans.” The students have completed essays, drawings, and maps, and continue to work on producing iMovies and Power Point presentations.

“I think the Sanctuary Ocean Count served as a catalyst for this collaboration, but the real work was done by the teachers and students. The teachers and I will be working in the coming months to refine the school-based Ocean Count and its alignment with DOE standards.” Y

ENTANGLED... Cont. from page 1

responded to the call by assembling the newly formed whale rescue team, consisting of representatives of the sanctuary and the State Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR). Research vessels from the University of Hawai’i Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Laboratory also lent assistance finding and tracking the whale.

When the team reached the whale aboard the sanctuary’s 22’ support vessel, they saw that the whale was entangled around its mid-section by a three quarter-inch polypropylene rope that was cutting into the animal’s blubber.

The team first tried to slow the whale down by attaching several surface buoys to trailing lines. However, instead of slowing the whale to a stop, the yearling pulled the buoys and inflatable boat, with Mattila and Ed Lyman aboard, nearly eight miles, reminiscent of what American whalers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century referred to as a “Nantucket sleigh ride.” “For awhile there I thought it was going to take us to O’ahu,” said Mattila.

Mattila and Lyman then attached a sea anchor (underwater parachute) to the trailing end of the rope to create additional drag. However, the increased pressure on the rope caused it to snap, releasing the whale from the rope, allowing it to swim away freely.

Although the whale and the rescuers received minor injuries in the effort, the disentanglement was clearly a success. “It was really a group effort,” said Mattila. “We would not have been successful without the coordination of NOAA Fisheries PIAO and the support of DAR-Maui, the Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Lab research team and Capt. Bennett.”

Man-made ropes and nets, both actively used, or debris kill an estimated 60,000 whales, dolphins and porpoises yearly. Anyone sighting an entangled whale should call the Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline at (888) 256-9840. Y

# NEW SANCTUARY HEADQUARTERS CLOSER TO REALITY

The vision for upgrading the sanctuary headquarters facility in Kīhei is one step closer to reality. A draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was recently released outlining the implementation of a facility master plan for the 1.13 acre Maui site, and the environmental and cultural impact of the plan.

The proposed plan recommends the removal of two antiquated storage buildings, construction of a new 4,625 square foot multi-purpose building, installation of a new parking lot and site landscaping, including creation of an outdoor courtyard. The multi-purpose building will include additional office, storage, and exhibit space, and a public lecture room that can accommodate 100 people.

The purpose of upgrading the headquarters is to enhance the sanctuary’s performance in six key areas of activity, fundamental to the Sanctuary’s primary goal of resource protection: education and outreach, native hawaiian culture, enforcement, inter-agency cooperation, social impacts, and research.

The final EA, which is expected to be issued in June 2003, will reflect public and agency comments received during the 30-day comment period. Y

## Ka Leo O Ke Koholā

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Please visit the sanctuary web site:  
<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

## SANCTUARY DATEBOOK

[Celebration of the Arts](#)

Date: April 18 & 19

Sponsor: Ritz Carlton

Place: Ritz Carlton, Kapalua, Maui

Time: Friday, April 18 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Saturday, April 19 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact: Rhonda VanWingerden 1-800-831-4888 or 879-2818

Sanctuary to host a booth.

[Maui Nui Botanical Gardens Earth Day Festival](#)

Date: April 19

Sponsor: Maui Nui Botanical Gardens

Place: Maui Nui Botanical Gardens

Time: 9-4 p.m.

Contact: Claire Cappelle 1-800-831-4888 or 879-2818

Sanctuary to host a booth.

[Hilo Earth Day](#)

Date: April 22

Sponsor: Associated Students of the University of Hawai’i – Hawai’i Community College, Student Activities Council, and the University of Hawai’i at Hilo Student Association

Place: University of Hawai’i, Hilo

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Contact: Christine Brammer 1-888-55WHALE

Sanctuary to host a booth at this annual event that attracts thousands of students as well as the local public.

[Moloka’i Earth Day Festival](#)

Date: April 25

Sponsor: The Nature Conservancy

Place: Mitchell Pau’ole Center

Time: 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Contact: Rhonda VanWingerden 1-800-831-4888 or 879-2818

Annual Earth Day Celebration to educate the public about the part they can play in preserving natural and cultural resources. Sanctuary to host a booth.

[Mahelona Hospital Petting Zoo](#)

Date: May 6

Sponsor: Mahelona Hospital

Place: Mahelona Hospital, Kaua’i

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Jean Souza 246-2860

Sanctuary will host an activity booth at this annual event attended by 900 pre-school students. Students will be exposed to information about whales and the ocean.

[Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting](#)

Date: May 15

Sponsor: Sanctuary

Place: Honolulu International Airport

Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Contact: Amy Glester 397-2655

32nd meeting of the Sanctuary Advisory Council.

[Hawai’i Boat Show](#)

Date: May 17 & 18

Sponsor: Ocean Sports Productions

Place: Ko ‘Olina, O’ahu

Time: TBA

Contact: Christine Brammer 397-2651

Sanctuary will host an exhibit and activity booth that offers information about humpback whales and the Sanctuary.

[Spring Festival at ‘Ele’ele Elementary School](#)

Date: May 23

Sponsor: ‘Ele’ele Elementary School

Place: ‘Ele’ele Elementary School, Kaua’i

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Jean Souza 246-2860

Sanctuary will nost multiple activity booths staffed by 6th grade students. The 6th graders will be teaching younger students about humpback whales and the ocean.